

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA
AND
THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

NO. XXIV.

NOVEMBER, 1849.

ARTICLE I.

NATURAL THEOLOGY.

By Rev. J. Haven, Jr., Brookline, Mass.

IF theology is the science of religion, natural theology is the science of natural religion, and should not be confounded therefore with natural religion itself. The question is, not whether in fact there is a God, but how do we *know* that there is one, what is the evidence that there is one, and how shall that evidence be best drawn out and presented; not whether there is in man an idea and belief of a supreme being, an idea and belief sufficient to control his conduct, nor whence he derives that idea, but simply what is the logical value of it. This palpable distinction between natural religion and natural theology, has not indeed always been kept in view by theological writers, yet is manifestly of importance.

If the definition now given be a correct one, natural theology, regarded as a science, lies evidently at the foundation and constitutes the firm basis of all other theological science. As in religion everything rests upon the *conviction* in the mind that there is a God, so in theology, in like manner, everything rests upon the *certainty*, the clear and decisive *evidence* that there is such a being. This evidence, it is the appropriate work and province of natural theology to set forth and arrange. Till this be done, nothing can be accomplished in theology. The science of revealed religion does not include this, any

more than the superstructure includes the foundation on which it is built. Revelation implies a revealer; it must first be known, then, that *there is* a being to reveal, before it can be known that anything is revealed. Until natural theology has done its work, all other theology is impossible.

Nor does revelation come in to aid and assist us in this work. Revelation is out of place, cannot be appealed to as authority, until natural theology has first established this primary truth, that besides and beyond man there is a being capable of revealing himself, and eternal truth, to man.

Manifestly, then, it is of the highest importance that a science which lies thus at the foundations of all other theological truth, should be well and thoroughly wrought, and carefully adjusted to its true position. There should be no flaw in the arguments. No part of the work should be slightly done. It should not be left to the enemies of truth to make the first discovery of any existing defect or weakness in the processes of our reasoning. In this matter, the friends of truth have more at stake than its enemies. He who points out a defect, or suggests an improvement, in the method of stating or defending that truth, should be regarded not as a foe but as a friend to the cause.

Yet, strange as it may seem, no department of theology perhaps has been left in so unfinished a state as this; none stands in greater need of what military men term *inspection*. The work has been wrought upon by diverse minds, in different ages, and in diverse methods; each in his own way has wrought. Some of the laborers have been truly sons of might, men of lofty and noble powers. But how well the diverse parts of the structure are fitted to each other, what are the strong and what the weak points in the line of defences, how and where it can most readily be assailed, these are to say the least open questions.

What we propose, in the present essay, is to take a general survey of this department of theological science, with a view of ascertaining, if possible, the comparative strength, and value, of the different arguments generally relied upon to establish the cardinal doctrine of the divine existence.

For this purpose some method of classification becomes necessary. It has been common to arrange the various arguments in natural theology under the general methods *a priori* and *a posteriori*. It admits of question however whether, strictly speaking, there is any such thing as *a priori* reasoning on this subject; any such thing as reasoning from some high and abstract truth downward to the existence of a supreme being; whether, in fact, all arguments for that existence

must not and do not have some starting point, some *novum*, in the world of effect.

Take for instance the argument of Clark, usually pronounced one of the finest specimens of this method of reasoning. The starting point in this instance is that *something exists*; from which it is, by a logical process, inferred that something has always existed—something uncaused, independent, the first cause of all other existence. The whole argument goes to show that this something which now exists is in reality an effect, and requires a cause. It cannot therefore with propriety be termed *a priori* reasoning, since it does not proceed from cause to effect, but on the contrary *from effect to cause*.

The celebrated argument of *Descartes*, derived from the idea of God in the human mind, is another instance of what has been usually called the *a priori* method. The substance of the argument is, that there could not be this *idea* of a supreme being in the human mind, unless there were a *corresponding being*, the type and originator of the idea; in other words, this idea of God, which man has, is an *effect*, which requires God as its *cause*. Is this reasoning from cause to effect, or the reverse?

Presuming then that there is, strictly speaking, only one general method of procedure in conducting the argument for the divine existence, viz. the *a posteriori*, it becomes evident that what we have to do is precisely this; to bring forward, from whatever source, something which can be shown to be an effect, and then to show, moreover, that for the existence of this effect there is and must be not simply a cause, but *such* a cause as corresponds to our idea of God. The effect must be such as to require for its production all that which we include under the term God. For it is evident that, in reasoning from effect to cause, we can infer no more in the cause than is sufficient to account for the effect. This principle has been strangely overlooked, however, by many writers. They have set out with a definite idea in their own minds of what God is, and having demonstrated, as they suppose, the existence of an effect, and so of a cause, they conclude that they have also demonstrated the existence of the being whom they call God, without pausing to inquire whether the effect in question is of such a nature as to require for its production just *that sort* of cause which they have in mind, and which they thus designate. The truth is, we are dependent on the effect for all our positive knowledge of the cause,—not simply *that* it is, but *what* it is; not simply that there is a God, but what sort of a being God is. The cause *may* be more than commensurate with the effect,—adequate to the production of effects vastly beyond this which we observe; but we do not know that it is so,

have no *evidence* of that, and therefore no certainty of it. What we have to do then in natural theology is, first to find something which can be clearly shown to be an effect, and then to show, furthermore, that it is *such* an effect, as requires for its production not a cause, merely, but *the* cause whose existence we wish to establish, and which we call God.

The arguments on which different theological writers have placed reliance, are manifold and diverse; yet they admit of being reduced to several classes, or leading divisions, according to the sources from which they are derived.

There is first the argument from the *simple existence* of matter — the ground-work and simple premise of which is this proposition, '*something is.*'

There is next the argument from the *properties* and *relations* of matter; not merely *something is*, but *something is so and so*. The argument from design, commonly so called, falls under this division.

Both the methods now indicated relate to the *external* world, *things without*. They are the arguments on which English and American theologians have hitherto placed their chief reliance, and with which they have principally concerned themselves. But arguments which others have deemed at least of equal strength and importance have been drawn from *the world within*. Of this sort is the method of reasoning from *the idea of God* which exists in man, in other words from the nature and operation of the human mind.

Then deeper and beyond this, in the inner world, there is the *moral nature and constitution* of man, which also furnishes an argument for the divine existence. These four comprise, it is believed, the various arguments which have been generally relied on to prove the existence of the supreme being.

I. The argument from the *existence of matter*, claims our first attention. It may be thus expressed. Something exists, therefore something must always have existed; either the things which now are, or else some other and superior being capable of producing them. But the things which now are, the present system and universe of things, lying about us, subject to our observation, of which we form a part, *this* cannot have been in existence from eternity; is not independent, self-existent, and uncaused. Therefore some other being is so, and is the first cause and author of these things.

This has been regarded by many as one of the strongest arguments which it is possible to frame in proof of the existence of a first cause. Reduced to the syllogistic form, it would read thus:

1st *Syllogism.*

1. Whatever exists must either have *eternally* existed, or have *begun* to exist.
2. But matter has not existed eternally.
3. Therefore matter begun to exist.

2d *Syllogism.*

1. But whatever *begins* to exist, has some *cause* of beginning.
2. Matter begun to exist.
3. Therefore matter has some cause of its existence ; in other words a producer or creator.

It is evident now at a glance on what portion of the argument the burden of proof mainly falls. In either syllogism, the major premise is obviously true ; self-evident ; it is the minor alone that requires proof. To show that the present system of things is *not eternal*, that it had a *beginning*, *hic opus, hoc labor est*. Unless this can be clearly and certainly established, the whole argument falls. You have not shown an *effect*, and cannot therefore demand a *cause*. Now this is precisely the point which it is most difficult to establish, and which nevertheless seems to have been comparatively overlooked, and hastily passed over by many writers, not sufficiently aware of its importance and difficulty. It is manifestly not so much the *existence* as the *begun* existence of matter that concerns us in the present argument.

And how is this to be proved ? For in an argument of this sort we are not to take a mere impression, a conviction of the mind, however firm, as a sufficient basis of reasoning, but to demand clear and conclusive evidence. What then is the evidence that the present system of things, or that matter in general, began to exist, and is not from eternity ?

Various have been the methods by which different writers have attempted to establish this. Prominent among them are these two. 1. The present system of things cannot be eternal because it is composed of successive and finite parts. Generation succeeds generation, plant succeeds plant, man follows man, and so on in constant series and progression. *Each part* being finite, the *whole* cannot be infinite. 2. It cannot be eternal because it admits of *change*, which is inconsistent with absolute and necessary existence.

The first of these arguments proceeds on the supposition that an infinite whole cannot be composed of a series of parts each of which is finite ; in other words, that an infinite series of finite parts is impos-

sible. This has been called a self-evident proposition. It may be fairly questioned, however, whether the evidence of its truth lies so fully obvious as to merit that high claim. Can we not conceive of extension or of duration infinitely protracted through successive periods, each of which is finite, yet, because they are infinite in series, making an infinite whole. If the successive periods or parts, though finite, are *without number*, so that you cannot fix your thoughts upon any one of them, and say *this* is the *first*, or *that* is the *last*, is not the *series*, in that case infinite? Indeed, what other idea can any man form of the existence of God than this, of a being existing from eternity in successive periods of conscious duration. '*An eternal now*,' however bold and sublime as a figure of poetic diction, yet, strictly interpreted, is an expression to which it is utterly impossible for the human mind, constituted as it is, to attach any clear and intelligible idea, for the simple reason that if it means anything, it means that which to us can never be true, but only a contradiction in terms. We might safely challenge any man to form in his own mind a distinct idea of the existence of a conscious intelligent being, from which idea and from whose existence all succession of thought, feeling and event shall be entirely excluded.

Does the finiteness of the parts destroy the infinity of the whole? Let us apply this to the divine existence. If there be a God, the first cause and producer of all things, he must have existed before he created; creation is an event, has a date, a beginning, previous to which the Deity existed alone. We may in our thoughts then divide the duration of the Deity into these two parts, in the first of which he dwells alone, in the second, surrounded with created existence. The two make up the entire duration of the Deity; yet both are finite; for the first ends, and the other begins, at the moment of creation. We may and do then, without inconsistency, or contradiction, conceive of finite parts, yet an infinite whole. It may be said that the duration of the Deity is in reality unbroken and continuous. This is admitted. But the same is also true of all existence so long as it continues. Succession of parts does not interrupt the series. The line may be in reality unbroken, yet in its extension may be carried through a succession of inches without number. A single human life is, from the moment of its beginning, to the instant of its termination, a continuous existence, an unbroken thread; yet it is no inconsistency to speak of it as composed of successive parts. Protract that existence, that continuous thread, infinitely in either direction, and you have an infinite series of finite parts.

Is eternal succession impossible? Let us apply this also to the di-

vine existence. It will be generally admitted that in the divine mind there is succession of thought and feeling. As has been already said, we can form no intelligible idea of a conscious rational existence, which is entirely destitute of this element. We do not, in fact, conceive of God as cherishing toward the sinner repenting to-day, the same emotions with which he regarded the same sinner impenitent and obdurate yesterday. Nor do we conceive of Him as putting forth, at one and the same instant, all volitions and all acts; as constantly creating this world, or constantly redeeming it, or as creating and redeeming it at one and the same moment. Succession of events enters into all our conceptions of divine agency, as does succession of thought and feeling into all our ideas of the divine existence. Unless then the Deity has existed, at some time, absolutely without thoughts, emotion, or volition, there has actually been an infinite succession of these in the divine mind.

Of the existence of saints and angels, and in like manner of our own future existence, we can form no other idea than this of constant succession through endless duration. The joy, and the song, and the intellectual employment, of an angel before the throne to-day, is not the joy, and the song, and the range of thought, of that same angel as he stood before that throne yesterday and worshipped. And if we are ourselves to exist hereafter and that endlessly, it will be an existence protracted through successive periods of duration, marked by successive events, successive thoughts and emotions, following each other in endless series and progression. In these cases, however, the succession though endless is not strictly infinite, since it is admitted to have had a beginning. Not so however as regards the Deity. In any case we have only to make the supposition of eternal existence, and infinite succession becomes not only possible but seems to follow as a sure consequence. The law of succession then cannot be relied on to prove a begun existence.

It is not necessary, however, to demonstrate that there is any such thing, in fact, as infinite or eternal succession; but only, that such a thing can, without absurdity, or contradiction, be conceived to exist; that it is not impossible. In either case the objection is valid, and the argument is overthrown; for it is claimed, by those who advance this argument, to be a plain and self-evident truth, that such a thing as infinite succession is impossible.

A new element however is introduced into the discussion, when we conceive of the series as composed not merely of successive finite parts, but of parts that are successively dependent each on the other. Plants, animals, men, exist not merely in succession, but each genera-

tion depends for its existence on that which preceded. Inasmuch as each part is dependent, can the whole be independent? Can there be an infinite series, every part of which had a beginning, but the series itself no beginning; a chain, each link of which depends on another, but the whole on nothing.

That the argument is not materially modified by the introduction of this new element, will appear on a little reflection. In any argument or illustration of this sort, as for instance that of the chain, ideas derived from things finite are carried forward and applied to things infinite, and it is more than possible that some fallacy may lurk under such a method of reasoning. Because there cannot be a chain of numberless iron links suspended in the air without some point of support out of itself, it does not follow that there cannot be, or that there has not been, an infinite series of generations of living men, plants, or animals, in the world, each starting from the preceding, yet the whole series independent on any external producing cause. If the series be *infinite*, it is for that very reason, and by the very supposition, *independent* also. There is a virtual *petitio principii* involved in this reasoning. It is confidently asked on what the whole chain hangs, thus presuming a *first link*; whereas, if the chain be infinite, according to the supposition, it *has no first link*. What produced the first man, plant, animal, of a series which is infinite, and therefore has no first? Where did that begin, which by the very supposition has no beginning.

And where does he who so confidently propounds this query, as if it were the end of all controversy, propose to suspend his chain of existence? On a great first link, of course, and that link infinite and endless, itself unsupported, and hanging upon nothing. Has he ever seen *such* a chain? Is it not evident that this method of reasoning by illustrations drawn from sensible objects, is, whatever its logical value and force, an instrument capable of turning in either direction, and quite as likely to operate against, as for, him who uses it.

We come directly back then, after all, to the simple question, already discussed, can there be any such thing as an infinite succession or series. Whatever may be the true answer to this problem, the considerations now suggested are, it would seem, sufficient to show that the alleged *impossibility* of such a thing as infinite or eternal succession is, to say the least, not a *self-evident* proposition. In an argument of this sort, derived from the abstract laws of being or nature of things, an argument so positive withal in its assertions, and so lofty in its claims, the mind demands, and has a right to demand, clear and positive evidence of the things asserted. When the atheist

affirms that the present system and order of things is actually an eternal series, without beginning or cause, we demand proof; when the theist affirms that an infinite series is an *impossibility*, we demand of him likewise the irresistible evidence of what he asserts. It may be fairly questioned whether either theist or atheist can make good his assertion; whether both have not undertaken to prove what cannot be proved. Certainly the mere possibility of an eternal series, even if it were granted, is no evidence that the present system *is in fact* such a series. On the other hand the argument under consideration fails to furnish clear and sufficient proof that the present order of things is a *begun* arrangement, an *effect*.

It has been shrewdly objected to the idea of infinite succession that in this way we should obtain infinite quantities that are unequal to each other, one infinite greater than another infinite; that if the generations are infinite, the number of individuals must be vastly greater than that of generations, and the number of eyes, limbs, etc., so many times greater than that of individuals, and so we have one infinite ten times as large as another infinite, and that again just half as large as another, which it is affirmed is sheer absurdity. So reasons Bentley, and others after him have attained to the same sharpness. The dialectic subtilty of this objection is more worthy of admiration than its logical force. Are all infinities *equal* of necessity? Where is the evidence of that? Clark, the very Philistine of dialectic warfare, confesses the futility of this reasoning. "To ask whether the parts of unequal quantities be equal in number or not, when they have no number at all, being the same thing as to ask whether two lines drawn from differently distant points, and each of them continued infinitely, be equal in length, or not, that is whether they *end* together, when neither of them have *any end* at all!"¹

The other argument by which metaphysical writers have endeavored to prove that the present system of things is not eternal, viz. that it admits of change, next demands attention. It is contended that if the world has existed from eternity and is uncaused, the ground of its being is in itself alone, in other words it is a *necessary* existence, a thing which it is an absurdity, and a contradiction to suppose not to exist. But all change or modification is inconsistent with the idea of necessary existence. If the world is a necessary existence then it can never have been, or be supposed to have been, *other than it now is*, in any respect. It would be a contradiction, and absurdity, to suppose it either larger, or smaller, than it actually is; either swifter or slower, in its movements; having more, or fewer, mountains, rivers,

¹ Demonstr. p. 35.

seas, plants, animals, than it now has. Everything is fixed by the law of absolute unalterable necessity. But such is not the fact with respect to the present system. It admits of and is constantly undergoing change, and cannot therefore be eternal. Such is substantially the reasoning of *Clark* in his celebrated demonstration.

With all deference to the great minds that have elaborated, and the great names that have endorsed this argument, it may nevertheless be called in question; the more so, that it has ever professed itself fearless of scrutiny, and boldly challenged investigation.

Where then, it may be asked, is the *evidence* that all change is inconsistent with self-existence; how do we know that? Let the same method of reasoning be applied to the divine existence. The Deity it will be admitted exists by a necessity of his own nature; owes his existence to nothing out of himself. It is impossible then, according to this argument, to conceive of him either as *not* existing, or as being *other* than he is. But how is this? Since I can conceive the *world* not to exist, can I not also, in that case, conceive the *world-maker* not to be; the work being gone, what forbids my supposing there is no workman? Or I can conceive that it is *self-existent*, and then, being no longer an effect, it does not demand a cause. Or I can conceive it to be a different sort of world from what it is, in which case it may have required a different kind of Deity to produce it. Had it been a malevolent effect, I should have inferred a malevolent cause. In a word, there is no inconsistency or absurdity in modifying our conceptions of the maker, in such a manner as to correspond to any changes we may make in our conceptions of the things made. If it be not absurd or impossible to *conceive* of the world as not existing, or as existing otherwise than now, then it is not absurd or impossible to *conceive* of the Deity as not existing, or as being other than he now is. But it is a contradiction in terms, says *Clark*, to *suppose* a self-existent, that is, a *necessarily* existent being, not to exist, or to be other than it is. Therefore, he says, this world is not self-existent. Therefore, he might add, also, the Deity is not self-existent.

But in those conceptions which the mind ordinarily forms, and is taught to form, of the Deity, is there not involved something of this forbidden element, of transition from one state or circumstance of being, to another; do we not conceive of him, *now* as working, *now* as resting from his works; and that without any implied change in his nature, or attributes? Now, who will say that in this transition of the supreme being, from the state of absolute rest, and alone existence, to that greatest of all conceivable works, *creation*, — the calling into being other existences, and innumerable worlds, and systems, — there

is not involved a change at least as great as occurs on the earth, in the gradual passing away of one generation, and the succession of another, the falling of a tree in the forest, and the springing up of another in its place, or the gradual changes constantly going on in the relative position of mountain and valley, of land and sea? For in these transitions which we observe, this constant succession of things in the world, is it not a change of *state* and *circumstances*, rather than of *nature* or *essential qualities*, that we behold? How do we know that all this does not take place in nature according to some fixed, eternal law, founded in the very nature of things, as immutable in its character, as unvarying in its operations, existing by a necessity as absolute, as the Deity itself—the universal, eternal, immutable law of transition and succession? What forbids such a supposition, and what is there in it inconsistent with the idea of self-existence? Where is the evidence that these and the like transitions have not been going on eternally?

But however that may be, if we can and do conceive of the supreme being as working, or as resting from his works, as existing for a longer or a shorter time before beginning to create, as calling into existence more or fewer planets, systems, orders of being, as having never created, if in any or all these respects we can, without absurdity, suppose the Deity to have been, or to have done, far otherwise than he has actually been, or done, if it be, in fact, no more a contradiction to reason, and to the actual state of things, to make such a supposition than it is to suppose the world different from what it now is, then how does it appear that all change, and even the very conception and possibility of change, is inconsistent with *necessary and eternal existence*? And if this be not inconsistent with the necessary existence of the Deity, why should it be with that of the universe, or of being in general?

But to suppose a self-existent being *not* to exist, or to exist *otherwise* than it is, involves as great an absurdity, says Clark, as to suppose two and two not to be equal to four. But suppose one were to deny this. Suppose some one, less acute than the great philosopher, were audacious enough to say, "To my mind this does not so appear, nor can I possibly make it appear thus;" what shall be done with this man? How shall he be made to perceive the alleged absurdity? Is not his *denial* of any such absurdity, as valid in argument, as our *assertion* of it? To say the least, is it not somewhat singular that, if this be as its advocates affirm a self-evident truth, so many, and by no means illiterate, or ill-informed minds, should have confessed themselves unable to perceive its conclusiveness?

The argument under consideration, however subtle and ingenious, has failed to commend itself generally to reflecting minds, much more

to the popular apprehension. Dr. Reid says of it, "These are the speculations of men of superior genius; but whether they be solid as they are sublime, or whether they be the wanderings of imagination into a region beyond the limits of the human understanding, I am unable to determine." Dr. Brown speaks with more confidence: "I conceive the abstract arguments which have been adduced to show that it is *impossible* for *matter* to have existed from eternity — by reasoning on what has been termed *necessary existence*, and the incompatibility of this *necessary existence* with the qualities of matter — to be relics of the mere *verbal logic* of the schools, as little capable of producing conviction, as any of the wildest and most absurd of the technical scholastic reasonings on the properties or supposed properties of entity and non-entity." Dr. Chalmers also professes himself entirely unsatisfied with this argument, and unimpressed by it. "Because I can imagine Jupiter to be a sphere instead of a spheroid; and no logical absurdity stands in the way of such imagination,— therefore Jupiter must have been created. Because he has only four satellites, whilst I can figure him to have ten; and there is not the same arithmetical falsity in this supposition as in that three and one make up ten,— therefore all the satellites must have had a beginning. * * *

We must acknowledge ourselves to be unimpressed by such reasoning. For aught I know, or can be made by the light of nature to believe — matter may, in spite of those dispositions which he calls arbitrary, have the necessity within itself of its own existence — and yet be neither a logical nor a mathematical necessity. It may be a physical necessity — the ground of which I understand not, because placed transcendently above my perceptions and my powers — or lying immeasurably beyond the range of my contracted and ephemeral observation."

The metaphysical argument against the eternity of the present system has been somewhat differently stated by a late ingenious writer. — The world *might* have had a beginning — there is nothing to forbid such a supposition. If it might have had a *beginning*, then it might have had a *cause* — whatever admits of the one, admits of the other. But if it *might* have had a cause, then it *must* have had one — for whatever is *capable* of having a cause of its existence, is *incapable* of existing without a cause. — We have here, to use an artistic term, a *variation* of the original theme, sprightly and pleasing, but embodying the same essential idea. It devolves on the reasoner, in this case, to show, inasmuch as he throws the whole weight of the argument on that one word, that the world *might* have had a beginning; that it is possible for anything, for such a thing, for *this* particular thing, to

come into existence out of nothing ; and also to show that whatever can be caused, *cannot* be *uncaused* ; neither of which propositions can easily or clearly be made out by any abstract process of reasoning. Suppose, in the present instance, an obstinate objector were to insist upon reversing this argument, as an engineer reverses his machine and so obtains movement and speed in a contrary direction. Suppose he were to say, It is possible that the world should have had no beginning ; it *might* have been eternal. If it might have had no beginning, then it *must* have had no cause. But if it *might* have had no cause, then it *must* have had none, for whatever admits of being *uncaused* does *not* admit of being *caused*.

It will be observed that in this investigation we have not been careful to distinguish between the existence of matter in the abstract, and its existence in the present state and system of things, as we find it in our world. The argument, in fact, includes both ; nor is the distinction essential to it, since if the *non-eternity* either of matter abstractly, or of our world as we find it, were once clearly established, we obtain in either case the demonstration of a first cause.

Whether this point can be established by any abstract process of reasoning is, to say the least, altogether questionable. As brought to prove the present system an effect, and so to establish the existence of a first cause, the metaphysical argument must, on the whole, it would seem, be pronounced unsatisfactory and unsound. When once this point is established, the method in question may, however, be of service in demonstrating the self-existence, independence, and eternity of that first cause, which can perhaps in no other way be so clearly shown.

How then, it will be asked, since not in this way, is that most important point, absolutely essential indeed to the argument, and to the whole science of natural theology, to be made certain ? That the present system, this world of ours, had a beginning, may, we believe, be clearly shown, if not metaphysically, yet in some other way. The *physical sciences* have it for their appropriate sphere and province to do this ; and they *can* do it to the satisfaction, it would seem, of any reasonable mind. They can and do show that the present things have not always been ; that our earth has passed through a series of changes, always advancing. In the deep foundations of the globe itself, they read the sure history of these changes, written as with an iron pen, and lead, in the rock, forever. They carry us, with unerring step, back to a period in that history when, instead of the present highly organized forms of matter, and of life, there is no longer the least perceptible trace of any organization whatever. Back of the

ever rushing stream of time, and beneath its mighty cataract, they conduct us along, till we reach the spot where all forms of organized being finally disappear, and we stand on "*termination rock*;" beyond all is darkness; we can go no further; but the conclusion irresistibly forces itself upon the mind, uttered as with the sound of many waters, that this unorganized matter, too, had its beginning. But however that may be, one thing is now certain, that *life* in all its varieties of structure and development, life in the plant, the animal, the human species, had a *beginning*. We reach, we examine, a point in the earth's history when, as yet, there were none of these things. But if these things began, there must have been a *beginner*; one capable of producing such things. The existence of a first cause is thus reached.

In all this, however, we are reasoning not from *metaphysics* but from *physics*. So doing, we build not upon airy abstractions, but upon the firm and solid earth.

II. We come now to the second method or argument in natural theology, an argument not from the existence of matter, but from its manifest properties, and relations. The starting point, the *novum*, is entirely changed; the scene is laid, not in the distant places of the universe, but near at home, amid the daily walks and under the common observation of men; the argument rests, not on the abstract truth that matter, or even our world, exists, but that it is *such a sort* of world as we find it to be.

The strongly practical tendencies of the English mind have made this a favorite method of reasoning with theological writers of that country, especially for the last century; previously to which the metaphysical reasoning of Clark, and others of that school, held, for a time, predominant influence. The argument is that in the world, as it lies before us, there are such evident indications of contrivance, such adaptation of means to ends, such fitness of one thing to another, as can leave no reasonable mind in doubt that an intelligent, designing mind has been concerned in the arrangement; in other words, that there must have been a contriver.

What, now, is the real strength and true value of this argument? Has it sound logic, and a sound philosophy, as its basis and support? In proposing and conducting such inquiries, let us not be understood as disparaging, much less abandoning, this method of reasoning, but rather as diligently carrying on a sort of coast-survey and soundings, with a view to ascertain the true depth of the channel, and its proper direction. The more important the channel, the more important that such survey and soundings should be accurately and thoroughly made.

It must be borne in mind that, whatever method we pursue in natu-

ral theology, the things to be done, as stated at the outset, are these two: first, to show conclusively that something is an *effect*; then, that it is *such* an effect, as to require for its producing cause *whatever we include under the name and idea of God*. Does then the argument from design, as now stated, really accomplish these two things?

In order to settle this point, we must first determine what degree and kind of evidence is necessary in order to prove anything to be an effect. How are we to *know* what is effect, and what is not? The real question is, not what proves a *designer*, but what proves *design*. Does simple *fitness of means to an end* prove it? This is assumed, it will be perceived, in the argument now under consideration. It is the running principle that pervades and holds together the entire body of reasoning in Paley's justly admired treatise; the warp, that receives the entire filling, with all its beautiful devices. The design of the work, and object of the writer, is evidently this,—to point out in nature a considerable number of instances, as striking as possible, of this manifest fitness of means to a given end,—and thence to draw the conclusion, from the facts observed, that this fitness *must have been designed*, must be an effect, and therefore requires an efficient cause or producer. It is assumed that simple fitness of means to an end is a sufficient basis on which to construct the argument, is in itself demonstration that the system of things, which exhibits such arrangement and relation of parts, must be an effect. The whole argument from design, as usually brought forward by its advocates, rests upon this essential premise, which, instead of assuming, it had been well perhaps to have examined somewhat thoroughly, before proceeding to build so important a structure upon it. This seems nowhere to have been done. Everywhere it is taken for granted, that fitness of things to given ends *is* contrivance, and so proves a contriver. But is this invariably and necessarily so? Is there no element overlooked in this process? Does simple fitness to an end, however striking and admirable that fitness may be, in itself prove design? Is it of no consequence that we should know whether this relation and fitness of things, which we call contrivance, is a *begun* arrangement, or not? If in proposing these inquiries, we seem to be striking at the very foundation of the argument from design, as usually advanced, it is only that we may replace that argument upon a firmer basis.

The question is one not to be determined at a glance. The simple fact that the human mind, whether rightly or wrongly, logically or illogically, does nevertheless almost universally reason in this manner, that where there is manifest fitness of things to given ends, *there is design*, *there is an effect*, somebody has been at work *there*, this of it-

self goes far toward establishing the correctness of the principle in question. But how is it, and why is it, that we invariably reason in this manner? This is a matter deserving the closest attention.

Reid, Stewart, and the philosophers of that school, refer the matter to a *primary law* of the human mind. We are *so constituted*, that when we perceive this relation of things, this fitting of one thing to another so as to bring about a certain end, we are convinced that there must have been design there — contrivance — a contriver; and in coming to this conclusion we simply carry out the law of our nature.

Now it is easy to account for any phenomenon which we imperfectly understand, in this way; to refer it to a *primary law* of the mind, and say, we are *so constituted*, and that is the end of the matter. Nor is it easy for any one to show that such is not the true solution of the problem. It deserves to be considered, however, whether, in the present instance, such a principle will not carry us too far. *If it be a primary law of the human mind that leads us to reason thus, then such reasoning is beyond question correct, and its conclusions valid. Wherever we see this fitness and relation of things, there it becomes certain that design has been employed. We have the best possible evidence of it, the testimony of this primary law of our own being, which, unless we are so constituted as to be always deceived, must speak the truth. Whatever presents to our mind, then, any fitness to a given end, is, beyond doubt, an effect, a contrivance; the greater and more manifest the fitness — the greater and more sublime the end to be accomplished — so much the greater the evidence and the certainty of this. Above all other beings and things, then, we must conclude the Deity to be an effect; for he, of all beings and things, presents to our conceptions the greatest and most manifest fitness to the greatest and sublimest ends. Nor is there any escape from this sad conclusion, but to retrace our steps, and proceed anew more cautiously.*

Perceiving the difficulties which are likely to attend this solution of the matter, others refer the whole thing to *human experience*. Of this number are Paley and Chalmers. It is not, according to them, because of any primitive law of the mind that we infer design where we see fitness to given ends, but simply because our own experience teaches us thus to reason. We have ourselves, in repeated instances, observed this fitness of things to be the result of special contrivance on our part, or on the part of others; have never perhaps, in a single instance, observed anything of it where it was not, to our knowledge and satisfaction, the result of such contrivance; we come, therefore, naturally to conclude that it is invariably so, and whenever we see

indications of this quality, we infer that these are in like manner evidences and results of the operation of a designing mind.

Whatever may be true of the justness of this conclusion, it is altogether probable that it is one to which we are led in the manner now indicated, i. e. as the result of our own experience. The matter admits of a practical test. Suppose one destitute of any such experience, having never contrived anything, or seen aught contrived by others, — a child thrown in early life upon some uninhabited island, subsisting on the spontaneous productions of nature, unacquainted with men and their ways. Let such an one discover, at length, on the shore of his solitary dwelling-place, some piece of human mechanism; — the watch with which Paley introduces his beautiful treatise. He has never seen such a thing before; forms no idea, of course, as to what it is, its nature, or use; is quite as likely to think it some strange *shell-fish*, or curious *insect*, as anything else. All reasoning about it, and from it to a producing cause is, in such a case, out of the question. The child or child-man may wonder where it came from, or how it came there, but not who made it. But suppose now the nature of this newly-discovered curiosity is in some way made known to him. His wondering eye begins to comprehend the mysteries of its complicated structure. He discerns its use, and the fitness of its parts to subserve that use. Does the idea of a *maker*, a *contriver*, necessarily suggest itself to his mind at this stage of the process? Why should it? Whence should it come? He has never known anything to be produced or contrived. What is there in the thing before him to awaken in his mind this new idea? The thing exists; that is certain; but for aught he knows it may always have existed. It is very curious; that is certain; but it may always have been as curious as now. It is capable of use; but so far as he can see, it may always have been capable of the same. There is nothing in the machine itself to indicate that it ever had a beginning, or to suggest the idea of a cause. He knows not that it is a *machine*; an effect, a contrivance. To him it is simply an *existence*, — one of the thousand existences which he perceives about him, — all to him mysterious; himself, — if his thoughts should ever travel so far into the region of conjecture, — his own existence, and origin, the greatest of all mysteries to himself.

How comes now this untaught, unobservant being to reach the grand idea of a producing cause? According to Reid, Stuart, and others, he gets it by the operation of a primary law of the mind which leads him, from the perceived fitness of things to certain ends, to infer at once, and independently of all experience, the existence of design and a designer. According to those who maintain the opposite view,

he does not get the idea of producing cause at all, and never will get it, — apart from revelation, until *his own experience* comes to his aid, and guides him to the first steps of an analogy, which is to lead him on to the sublime conclusion that there is a being who made him and all things.

That this is the right solution of the problem we are strongly inclined to believe. The question returns however, as on the other hypothesis, whether this inference, this reasoning from what we know to what we do not know, is perfectly just and sound. Assuming that the theory last mentioned is the true one,—that we reason in this manner only from experience,—and our experience being necessarily limited,—how far, and with what degree of confidence, may we safely follow such a guide? When we reason in this manner from analogy, do we reason always safely and conclusively? We have seen ships built, and houses; so far our experience; does it follow with certainty, from this, that worlds are built also, and are, in like manner, the effect of contrivance? So we conclude. But is the conclusion valid? Here is a man who, from whatever cause, has never as yet exercised the inventive faculties of his mind in the direct contrivance of anything with reference to the accomplishment of a given end,—who has never observed such efforts, on the part of others,—has no acquaintance in fact with the manifold devices and arts by which a busy, ever-plotting world makes all things subservient to its own purposes. This man is, according to the present argument, without evidence of the existence of a supreme being, in other words of a general designer of all things, since he is without personal experience or knowledge of any such thing as design. He may perceive manifold and notable instances of fitness and adaptation in the material world to the purposes of man's being, but they do not excite his wonder, for he has never known these things to be otherwise; much less are they data from which he can reason to the unknown and the infinite. Thus stands the case with him to-day. To-morrow, for the first time, he invents, he contrives, no matter what—the simplest mechanism of which we can conceive—a wooden peg—a leaf-apron. Now matters are essentially changed. The mystery of the great Universe now opens before him. He has sufficient data now from which to reason out with unerring certainty the existence of a great first cause. 'This wooden peg, this girdle of platted leaves, is a wonderful thing,—soliloquizes our new artist;—it's an invention of my own,—a contrivance. It would never have existed in its present form, and never have secured its present purpose, had not my own inventive mind formed the design and carried it into execution. Now

I understand how it is this goodly world, and I myself, exist. This peg instructs me. It is manifestly fitted to a useful purpose. It has that fitness only because of my forethought and contrivance. I am authorized then to conclude that *whatever* seems fitted to some use, is in like manner the product and result of forethought and intelligent design, — and as all things about me in the universe seem to possess such fitness to useful ends, it follows, from this my specimen of contrivance, that *all things* are likewise contrived.' Such, we are to understand, would be the course of thought in his mind; and according to the philosophy we are now discussing, it is a method of reasoning perfectly fair and conclusive.

Nor is it easy to see what should hinder our artist, and newly instructed reasoner, from proceeding a little further in the same direction. Ought he not, in consistency with the above reasoning, to conclude on the same principle, that *if there be*, anywhere else, out of this visible universe, and beyond this sphere of observation, any form of existence capable of promoting and bringing about useful ends, having a fitness therefor, *that also* is a contrivance — and so the being, whoever he may be, that wrought out and first divined this present system, possessed the qualities that fitted him for such a work, must *par eminence*, be an effect.

But even if we suppose him not to reason thus consistently, but to stop short of that dread conclusion, is it not evident, that to infer the contrived existence of *everything* which manifests fitness to useful ends, from the known contrivance of *anything* that has such fitness, to deduce the mechanism of the universe from the manufacture of the simplest human contrivances, is a method far too bold and sweeping; that the basis is quite too narrow for the superstructure; that there are and must be limits to this matter of reasoning from the results of our experience, the few and little things which we know, to the things which we do not know, the infinite, the eternal.

Now it is precisely at this point in the line of defences, that the enemies of our religion bring their heaviest machinery to bear. Because in this world of ours certain things are well adapted to certain uses, it does not follow, say they, that these things, and this world, are of necessity contrived. There is no evidence of that. It is merely an *inference* of our own, and one based on insufficient premises. We came to this conclusion by seeing human contrivances and devices. Our experience helps us to it. But it does not follow that because we contrive and produce certain arrangements and adaptations of things, therefore *all things whatsoever*, which manifest like fitness to certain ends, are also the result of contrivance. The watch that I

have seen constructed by the skill and ingenuity of the artist, may be to me a sufficient datum from which to conclude that *other* watches are in like manner contrived. But what right have I to infer that all things in the universe are thus produced, because I have seen one thing made? If thrown on an uninhabited shore, I should find in my rambles some structure of reeds or sticks or stones, capable of affording shelter, and like to the habitations which men construct under such circumstances, I might reasonably conclude that some one had been there before me, and that this was his work. But because this hut of reeds or stones is manifestly a contrivance, the result of a producing intelligent cause, shall I proceed at once to the conclusion that the planet *Jupiter* is likewise a contrivance, or that the world in which I live is so? I have seen a ring manufactured. Is it therefore certain that the rings of *Saturn* are likewise produced? Who has ever seen a world made, continues the skeptic; or known of one being made within the sphere of his personal observation? If one had ever made, or seen made any such thing as a world, then he might reasonably conclude that *other* worlds were made also. But where is the evidence of it as matters now stand?

Such is substantially the reasoning of *Hume* in his famous objection to the argument from design. The world, he contends, if it be an effect, is a *singular* one, unlike anything which we have ever seen produced. We have had no experience in world-making as we have in watch-making, and cannot therefore reason from the one case to the other.

No one perhaps has more resolutely girded himself to encounter this formidable objection than the truly noble Chalmers. Admitting that experience is the basis of all our reasoning in such matters, he contends that in the present case we are not destitute of that basis, but, on the contrary, have all the experience we need. It is not necessary he contends that we should take into account *the specific* end which was intended to be accomplished in any piece of mechanism, but only that we should see *an* end, and that evidently designed. Having in many instances observed the invariable connection between a designing intellect, as cause, and any wise and useful end, as the result, we may in all cases where one of these two terms is given, infer the existence of the other. It matters not whether we have ever seen a watch made, or any machine having exactly that office and use. We have seen *other* things made in which was the like fitness of part to part, and of means to ends, and in which this fitness has always been the result of contrivance. In a thousand instances we have observed the relation between these two things, the fitness, and the contrivance,

to be that of antecedent and consequent ; of cause and effect. This experience warrants us in concluding, that whenever we find, in any new instance, the same phenomenon, i. e., adaptation to an end, we find it there as the result of the same antecedent, i. e., a designing intelligence. " Thus we might infer the agency of design in a *watch-maker*, though we never saw a watch made" — and so " we can on the very same ground infer the agency of design on the part of a *world-maker*, though we never saw a world made."

This reasoning is valid, on the supposition that *there is* such a being as a *world-maker* ; in other words, that the world is an effect, a thing made. The argument proceeds entirely and avowedly on this supposition. It is only *in things made* that we perceive this invariable connection between fitness and an end, in the things produced, and designing intelligence, in the producer. It is only *in things made*, therefore, that having one of these terms we can safely infer the other. If we extend the inference to other classes of objects, to things *not* produced, or of whose production, and begun existence, we have no *evidence*, we set sail on an ocean of which we know not the shores and bounds, if indeed there be any, or to what strange lands our venturesome course may tend ; we drive before the winds with neither chart nor way mark to guide us, nor any headland in view, sed coelum undique, et undique pontus. Nay it is not difficult to foresee on what rocks we must in the end be driven, for if we reason in this manner from things which we know to be produced, to things which we do not know to be so, and conclude that fitness in the latter is the result of contrivance, because it is so in the former, then we must include the Deity himself in our catalogue of effects, nor is there any possible way of escaping that conclusion.

Now beyond doubt if the world *be* an effect, a produced and not an eternal existence, it is the production of an intelligent and designing cause. But *is* it an effect ? This is the very gist and substance of the whole question, — the very thing we are in pursuit of, but which after all is as far from our grasp as ever. The argument of Chalmers does not put us in possession of this, nor indeed does it profess to do so. It is a point which must be reached, if at all, in some other way.

The argument from design, however, as usually advanced, is *intended* and supposed, by those who bring it forward, to establish this very point, that this our world *is* an effect, a contrivance, and must therefore have had a contriver. They rely upon it as conclusive of this matter. Thus stated, the argument in question must be regarded as logically and essentially defective. Mere fitness to an end does not,

of itself, as we have shown, prove design. We must first know that this fitness, and the substance to which it pertains, is a begun arrangement, a begun existence; nor is there anything in the mere fitness, however striking that may be, to determine the point whether such fitness, and the subject or substance to which it pertains, *be* or *be not*, an effect, a begun arrangement, in distinction from existence uncaused and eternal. There is this essential defect in the argument from design as usually stated. It is the defect of Paley and other reasoners. They rely upon the fitness of things as of itself proving contrivance, irrespective of the question whether this fitness had a *beginning* or not.

The true method of establishing this first, chief, absolutely essential point in natural theology, — that the present system of things is an effect, had a beginning, and a cause of beginning, — has been already indicated. It is not for any process of reasoning, whether from the abstract existence of matter, or from its wonderful adaptations and arrangements, to set this matter in a clear light. It is for *science* only to do this. It is for her to trace out for us, in nature itself, the written demonstration not simply of the begun but of the *recently* begun existence of whatever forms of organized life dwell upon the earth, and in its waters; — to show us the relics and records of a period quite antecedent to this of ours, — nay of many such periods; — and so to furnish us with the clearest evidence, that, whatever may be true of matter in the abstract, this fair and goodly frame of things which we now behold, and wherein we dwell, is an edifice of recent date. And this is enough for the purposes of the argument. To show that there is an *effect*, is to show that there is a *cause*. If these things *began*, there must have been a *beginner*.

Now it is at this precise point in the demonstration, and not at any previous stage in the process, that the argument from *design* falls into its proper place and use. The present things being not eternal but begun existences must be the result not of blind chance and mere fortuity, nor of an unintelligent unintentional agent, working without purpose or plan, and creating at random, but evidently and most manifestly they are the work of an intelligent and designing cause; there is order about them, — forethought, intention, plan about them; they are *mechanism*, not mere effects; must therefore have had not a cause merely, but a *contriver*, capable of planning and executing such designs. The wisdom, skill, power, of the Being who made these things are thus demonstrated; to some extent also, though not with equal clearness, perhaps, his goodness, and his other moral attributes, are evinced.

Such would seem to be the true province, the logical value, of the argument from design ; — not to prove the world, or the present system of things, to be an effect, — but, that being settled in another manner, — to show *what sort* of an effect it is, and what sort of a cause is required to account for it ; viz., such a cause as answers to the idea of God. It must follow, not precede, much less set aside, the testimony of physical science as to the origin of the present system. In its proper place it is valuable, indispensable ; out of it, of little worth.

Thus far we have considered only those arguments in natural theology which are derived from the external world. These may seem sufficient ; perhaps they are so ; but they are evidently not the whole field and scope of the science. They do not exhaust the theme. Beside this material system and mechanism that is in operation around us, this fair structure and frame of things without, there is in existence another and a different sort of world, immaterial, invisible, not less wonderful, not less replete it should seem with evidence of the mighty Maker, — the inner world, the spiritual part of man. This again unfolds itself into a twofold division, the mental, and the moral nature ; each of which furnishes independent evidence for the existence of a first cause. Upon this department of the subject, not less important than that which has already engaged our attention, nor less deserving a thorough investigation, we are compelled, by our already exceeded limits, to touch briefly if at all.

III. The argument, derived from the nature and constitution of the human mind. The argument which we are now to present admits of being stated in different forms, but is based on the essential fact that there is in the human mind an *idea* of such a being as God.

The following is in substance the famous method of *Descartes*.

Among the various ideas which I find in my mind is one of a very peculiar character, unlike all others, and which I am at a loss to account for, — the idea, that is, of a being infinite, eternal, independent, immutable, the first cause of all other being. Sublime idea, and most wonderful withal ! But how came I by such an idea ? How shall the mysterious phenomenon be explained that into my mind, limited as it is in the range of its observation and reflection, the thought, the bare conception, of such and so vast a being, should enter ? Whence came this idea to me ? The qualities enumerated are such, and so excellent, that the more I reflect upon them the more sure I am that the idea of a being in whom they all reside, and that perfectly, could never have originated in my own mind ; for how can the *finite* give birth to the *infinite*. Does it originate in the fact that I perceive in myself the *negation, the absence* of these qualities ? But

how came I to know that there were such qualities, and that I was destitute of them; how should I know my own *imperfection* and *finiteness*, if there were not already in my mind the idea of some *perfect* some *infinite* being, with whom to compare myself? Does it proceed from tradition? Then where did the tradition originate; whence came the idea of such a being to the mind that first entertained the thought, and handed it down to others? Is the mind *so formed* as to reach the thought spontaneously by its own natural cause and operations? Then *who formed* it so? Is it a simple matter of revelation? Then who revealed it? In fine, there is but one way in which we can account for this phenomenon, this idea in man of a being so unlike himself, and that is that the *idea* has its *corresponding reality*; that such a being does actually *exist*; and that this idea of him which we find in our minds, wrought into our very being, *is the stamp and impression of the workman's name, set indelibly upon the work.*

The force and validity of this reasoning depend entirely on its ability to show that the idea of God in the human mind is not only an effect, but such an effect as absolutely requires God for its cause. This it essays to do. That the idea in question is an effect of something is doubtless true, for it is not in the nature of an idea to be self-existent or uncaused; but that it could not have originated in the mind itself by the mind's own simple action, is not so clear. It is not an easy matter, if it be indeed a possible thing, to trace any idea, and especially such an one, to its true source, and determine with precision and certainty its real origin. What is there in this idea which precludes the possibility of its being the product of the mind itself? Is it certain that the finite cannot reach the idea of the infinite? Is it absolutely necessary that there should *actually exist*, and be known by me to exist, a being more wise or powerful than myself, in order for me to discover that my wisdom and my power are *limited*? And does not the idea of the unlimited, the infinite, stand over against the idea of the limited and the finite, so that by the simple law of contrast, if we have one, we get the other also? Do not the differences which we observe among men, one being greatly superior to another in power, skill, etc., lead us naturally to conceive of one superior to them all, in whom may reside the perfection of these various qualities, and whose powers may be unlimited? If in any such manner it is *possible* for the mind, unaided from without, and in the exercise of its own proper faculties, to reach the idea of Deity, then it is not certain but the idea in question may in fact have thus originated. In other words the existence of the *idea* does not render certain the actual existence of the *being* corresponding to that idea, inasmuch as the existence of

the idea can be accounted for in some other way. The argument labors at a disadvantage in undertaking to show positively that the idea in question could never have entered the human mind, had there been no such being as God in existence. This is more than can be determined with certainty. And yet it deserves to be considered well by us, more than we are wont to do in these exact and logical processes of reason, which call into exercise the intellect and not the heart, whether in fact the idea of such a being as *God*, the infinite, the uncaused, the eternal, the supreme, author of all being and perfection, be not something in itself more vast and wonderful than we have been accustomed to regard it; whether the simple conception and thought of such a being is not in itself, when duly considered, a grand and sublime mystery—a thought before which all others in the mind ought to bow down in awe and reverence—a thought which *may* be the very *shadow* cast upon the human soul, of that mysterious, incomprehensible, unseen one of whose being and presence it dimly informs us. Whatever may be the errors of the Cartesian philosophy, it has at least this element of truth and beauty, that it invests the idea of God in the human mind, regarded as a simple and pure conception, with a dignity and importance, and regards it with a reverence, well befitting its august and real character.

From the same source, the idea formed in the mind, Descartes derives also the following argument for the divine existence, which, though distinct from the one already stated, involves essentially the same principles.

Pertaining to this idea of God which is in the mind is this peculiarity, as I perceive, by which it differs from all other ideas, viz. that I cannot separate, in my thoughts, the *ideal* and the *actual*; cannot, as in all other cases, distinguish in my mind the existence from the essence; cannot divest my conception of the divine being of this element, or idea, that he *does actually exist*. Take away from me the conception which I form of this being as an *actual*, eternal, necessary existence, and you take away my *whole idea* of God; nothing is left in my mind, nor can I conceive of him in any other way. It must be, then, that actual, eternal, and necessary existence does really pertain to this being. For how do we determine, in any case, what are the essential qualities of any object? Is it not by observing that such and such qualities pertain to the very nature of the object, and are inseparable from it? I see clearly, for instance, whenever I think of a rectilinear triangle, that its angles are in amount equal to two right angles; cannot conceive of a rectilinear triangle of which this shall not be true. Hence I conclude that this equality of the angles to two

right angles is something inseparable from the nature of such a triangle; and that whether there is any such thing as a triangle actually in existence or not. In like manner, when I think of God, the idea invariably presents itself of a being to whom actual and real existence pertains. Existence pertains to the highest perfection; and my only idea of God is that of a being *every way perfect*. I can no more conceive of an imperfect God, i. e. a God existing only in name, or idea, or supposition, and not in reality, than I can conceive of a triangle the sum of whose angles shall be less than two right angles.

This argument like the preceding is based on that cardinal doctrine of the Cartesian system, that every pure and simple idea has its corresponding objective reality, from which it originates, and of which it is but the *tableau* or image; and that whatever pertains inseparably and essentially to the idea, belongs also invariably to the reality; a principle we cannot here stay to discuss. That there is a fallacy, however, in the argument now stated, is obvious. It does not follow, because I conceive of a triangle possessing a certain property, and never think of it otherwise, that any such triangle *exists*, but only that *if* it exists, then this property belongs to it. Neither does it follow that any such being as God exists, simply because I conceive of him as existing, and as possessing certain properties, as eternal, independent, and necessary being; but only that *if* such a being exists, then these qualities may be supposed to belong to him. Nothing is, in reality, determined as to the previous question, whether *there really is* such a being.

Aside from this, it admits of question whether the *premise* is correct; whether there is, really and of necessity, this alleged difference between our ideas of God and our ideas of other objects; whether we cannot, if we will, conceive of God otherwise than as a real actual existence, in the same sense that we can conceive of a star of a certain magnitude and brilliancy, and having a certain position in the firmament, without at the same time being sure that such a star actually exists. But on this we cannot dwell.

It is somewhat remarkable that *Dr. Clarke*, though professing great abhorrence of the Cartesian philosophy and method of reasoning, should himself unconsciously have constructed an argument very like the one now presented. We refer to that part of his treatise in which he discourses respecting "the absolute impossibility of destroying or removing some *ideas*, as of eternity and immensity, which therefore must be modes or attributes of a necessary being, actually existing." "For," continues he, "if I have in my mind an idea of a thing, and cannot possibly in my imagination take away the idea of that thing as

actually existing, any more than I can change or take away the idea of the equality of twice two to four, the certainty of the *existence* of that thing is the same, and stands on the same foundation as the certainty of the other *relation*. For the relation of equality between twice two and four has no *other* certainty but *this*, that I *cannot*, without a contradiction, *change or take away* the *idea* of that relation." (Demonst. p. 21.) Elsewhere he thus expresses the same thing: "We always find in our minds some ideas, as of *infinity* and *eternity*, which to remove, that is to suppose that there is no being, no substance in the universe to which these attributes or modes of existence are necessarily inherent, is a contradiction in the very terms. For modes and attributes exist only by the *substance* to which they belong. Now he that can suppose eternity and immensity removed out of the universe, may, if he please, as easily remove the relation of equality between twice two and four." (Dem. p. 15.)

This argument is based evidently on the assumption that immensity and eternity are *attributes of substance or being*; an assumption purely gratuitous, and without proof. *Space* answers both these conditions, possesses both these qualities or attributes, — eternity and immensity. Yet space is not *being*, much less is it God. With all respect, then, for the truly great man who thus reasons, we can but regard this as an argument more specious than solid, about which the thing chiefly wonderful is, how it could ever have misled or perplexed a truly discerning mind.

Respecting the ideal argument, as a whole, the conclusion at which, after a candid and thorough examination, the lover of truth will be likely to arrive, would seem to be this; — that while the idea which the human mind forms of God, and the fact that it does, of its own accord, as it would seem, reach and entertain that wonderful idea, *do afford strong presumptive evidence* of the existence of such a being, and may well and greatly strengthen our belief in that existence, derived from other sources, they cannot be regarded as in themselves furnishing clear and absolute demonstration of that great truth. For this we must look elsewhere.

IV. It remains for us to discuss only the argument derived from the *moral constitution of man*.

Among the various active principles and powers of the human soul, each having its appropriate object and sphere, and tending each to a certain definite result, there is observed *one* whose office and operation it seems to be to preside over all the rest — the *regulator*, as it may not inaptly be termed, or law-power, of the whole moral machinery in its various and complicated movements. This is the prin-

ciple which we call *conscience*, whose established authority in the soul is one of the most remarkable phenomena in its history and constitution.

It has indeed been contended by some that this is by no means, in fact, a universal and invariable law; that men, and even whole tribes and nations, are to be found, who seem to have no conscience. Now it is doubtless true that many are to be found in the world who do not *obey* this law of the inner being; — in whom it comes, by desuetude, to be a silent and virtually a dead letter; but certainly there is a palpable and broad distinction between the *authority*, and the actual *power* of a law. That which is a law *de jure*, may not in all cases be a law *de facto*. It is sufficient that there is in man a moral principle, or power, whose object, and evident legitimate office, is to control his moral action; and that when left to its own proper functions, unperturbed, undestroyed, it does execute that office, not without a sort of majesty and truly regal sway. It is no evidence against the existence and rightful authority of a king in the land, that he is for the time driven from his palace and his throne by a revolutionary faction; nor against the existence and rightful authority of a statute, that in a state of anarchy and rebellion, men no longer recognize its right, or submit to its control. This distinction between the *lex de jure* and the *lex de facto*, as regards the human conscience — a distinction which was first clearly pointed out by bishop Butler, and has been fully elaborated by Chalmers, is at once a very plain and a very important distinction, and constitutes a sufficient answer to the objection now stated.

Upon this observed peculiarity in the moral constitution, this law of our nature, theologians have constructed a favorite and powerful argument in proof of the divine existence. Here is a *law*. Where, and who, is the *law-maker*? Here is the various machinery of a court. Is there not, somewhere, a legislator, and a judge? So it would seem; and so, we presume, men would naturally and generally conclude. The evidence may be regarded however as presumptive rather than demonstrative, when we come to look more closely at it, inasmuch as it proceeds upon the supposition that the soul of man is a creation. Here, says the reasoner, is a piece of curious mechanism — a watch — whose movements are all nicely controlled by an adjustment called the regulator, which certainly seems to have been intended for this very purpose. Is there not, somewhere, an intelligent contriver and controller of these movements? Precisely such is the office of conscience in the human soul, and precisely such its testimony as to the existence somewhere of a power capable of appointing and enforcing this authority. Unquestionably, we reply, if there be here veritable

regulation, there must be, somewhere, a regulator; if mechanism, then a maker. But are we *sure* of the premises? What if the watch, to which this apparatus belongs, should fail to be proved a machine; what if the soul of man, instead of being a creation, a thing made, should turn out to be an uncaused and self-existent thing; then, for aught we know, this regulating apparatus, in both watch and soul, may have always pertained to them, and in full play, as an integral part of themselves. Let it be granted, or first proved, that man himself—this spiritual, conscious moral being, which we call the soul—is a *created* existence, that there is, in other words, true and real *mechanism* here, that what we call the law of conscience is a bona fide *law*, and not simply a mode in which the spiritual nature has always acted, that it is an *arrangement*, a *begun* thing, and it follows of course that there is, somewhere, or at least was, a beginner and producer thereof. But how are we to know this? That which is here assumed is the very thing to be proved—the very point we seek to establish. Nor is it from the inspection of the mind itself, or of the watch itself, independently of other sources of information, that this is to be learned. The regulator, in itself considered, cannot inform us whether it has always existed and operated as at present, or whether it is a piece of pure contrivance and mechanism; neither can the law of the human soul, which we term conscience. The question is, have we truly and properly a *law*—a creation—a contrived and originated property of a begun and continued existence. Not until this point is settled, can we appeal to the regulating power or principle, in the watch or in the soul, as evidence clear and positive of the existence of a being extrinsic to themselves, who is in reality the controller and governor, as he was the contriver, of these truly wonderful movements.

Now we do not deny that the argument from our moral nature, as also that from *design*, of which we have already treated, does furnish evidence of a certain kind, *presumptive* evidence, and that in a high degree, of the existence of a supreme being; that it serves greatly to strengthen our belief, already formed, in such a being; that it corroborates the evidence derived from other sources, and brings it very near and closely home to us; nay, further, that it is in itself sufficient to bring the mind *practically* to the conviction that there is a God; and that its actual operation, in the world as we find it, is to this effect; but only that it is not—what in theology, and as the basis of a science, we demand, and must in some way obtain—a sure and clear *demonstration* of this great truth. For nothing can be plainer than that a kind or degree of evidence which may be amply sufficient to guide

one's mind, and determine one's course and conduct in the practical affairs of life, may not be a sufficient basis on which to lay the firm and sure foundations of a science.

The moral argument properly comes in, then, so far as the theologian is concerned, not to demonstrate the existence of God, but to bear important testimony respecting his character and attributes, when once that previous point is settled; to show what sort of a being God is; and in this respect it is one of the most valuable and powerful arguments in the whole compass of natural theology.

Especially does this principle of conscience manifest the *righteousness* of God. If he were not himself a righteous being, and a lover of rectitude, he would not have implanted, as he has, this law of the right, and this love of it, in every human bosom. As it is, he has so made man that, by the very constitution of his being, and aside from any external or revealed law, he is placed under obligation to do right. There is a law within him, prior to anything from without, written on or rather wrought into the soul itself, as the figure is woven into the fabric which it adorns. The soul of man, approving of the true and the right, whether it will or no, wherever these are discerned, points with unerring certainty to that which is the source of this its moral power, viz. the rectitude of the divine character,—even as the poised steel, turning ever to the mysterious north, indicates the existence of that unknown power, which from afar controls all its vibrations, whose influence it ever feels, and at whose presence it trembles.

The principle of conscience establishes also the inflexible *justice* of God. It has its awards and punishments. It visits the evil-doer with the terrible stings of guilt and remorse, and throws over him the deep chill shadow of a coming retribution. It dashes into every cup of forbidden pleasure, the unfailing, inseparable element of consequent wretchedness. It links together human crime and human suffering, the vices and the miseries of men, so that the one shall follow the other invariably, as sound and echo pursue each other along the mountain side. There is with it no respect of persons, no taking of bribes. With its whip of scorpions it pursues the wrong-doer, whoever he may be, wherever he may go; tracks him into every obscurity, finds him out in the deepest retirement and the darkest night; overtakes him in his swiftest escape, and like the terrible avenger pursues and hangs over him wherever he takes his way.

On the other hand, the pleasure which, according to the working of this same law, dispensing its awards as well as its punishments, attends all virtuous and right action, is not less a proof of the *divine benevolence*. Thus to connect inseparably together right-doing and hap-

piness, wrong-doing and misery,— so to construct and constitute the mind, the spiritual nature, that by its own natural working this great end shall be secured, — this *self-regulating power*, in other words, of the moral machinery, — is in itself one of the highest evidences not simply of the divine wisdom and skill, but (what is much more to the purpose, and more important to establish) of the *goodness* of God. We can conceive that man might have been so constituted that, while under the highest obligations to virtue, nevertheless every instance of right action should be accompanied, not as now with a verdict of self-approval, and that purest of all pleasures, the happiness which he feels who is conscious of right intentions, and a conduct void of offence toward God and man, — but on the contrary with pain and self-reproach, and the wretchedness of an unsatisfied nature; while, on the other hand, evil action, and all wrong-doing, should secure the enjoyment of a present gratification and a consequent and enduring happiness. We can conceive that a *malevolent* being *would* have so constituted his creatures, arraying the moral principles of the soul against its innate love of happiness, placing in antagonism what are now intimately and inseparably joined, and thus removing at once what are now the strongest incentives to virtue and consequent well-being. Indeed we can have no clearer and more certain indication that benevolence constitutes a leading trait in the divine character, than the fact we are now considering, that he has actually constituted his moral creatures in such a way that duty and happiness shall with them be ever concomitant; that the moral nature shall approve of that which the divine law requires; that the ways of virtue are ever found to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. In truth, the whole phenomena of conscience evince most clearly to the observant and thoughtful mind the highest regard, on the part of the Creator, for the well being of man, which is only another expression for the highest and purest benevolence.

It would seem to be, then, the great advantage of the argument now under discussion, as compared with those previously named, that it brings into bold relief, and places in a clear, strong light, the *moral character* of God; in which respect the material or physical argument is, it must be confessed, in a measure defective. We can show, from the arrangements of the material world, the power, the wisdom, the skill, of the mighty builder. But what is there in external nature to demonstrate his righteousness, his justice, his goodness? *Indications* of these attributes, doubtless, there may be; hardly, as we think, proofs. The physical structure of the shark affords as clear evidence of the *skill* of the Creator as do the anatomy and organization of the

dolphin, or the flying fish ; it would not however, on the whole, be a fortunate selection from which to argue the divine *benevolence*, inasmuch as the various and truly skilful arrangements and contrivances which admirably conduce to the welfare of the creature in question, seem not, on the whole, so well adapted, either in theory or practice, to the safety and happiness of his *fellow* creatures. Indeed the great palpable fact, that *suffering* seems to have entered, as an element, into the very plan and structure — the first draft, so to speak — of this whole system of things, reaching back beyond the history and existence of man himself on the globe ; that the earliest records and relics of animal life and organization, in whatever form of being, and in whatever distant and otherwise unknown epoch of our earth's history, are records and traces also of the physical suffering with which that existence terminated, and that life passed away ; this, we say, is a problem not as yet duly pondered, it would seem, by those who find no difficulty in making out a complete idea and demonstration of God from external nature. The truth is, as we are strongly inclined to believe, that while the material universe furnishes abundant proof of the *existence* and *natural* perfections of the Deity, his *moral* attributes are fully exhibited only in the moral realm. And this is, in fact, precisely what we might reasonably have anticipated.

To sum up, in few words, what has been advanced in the present essay,—We have sought to ascertain definitely what it is which natural theology has to do, and the best way of doing it ; in other words, the true *province* and the true *methods* of the science. The things to be done, we find to be these two : first, to bring forward, from the existing universe, something which we can clearly show to be an effect ; and then to show that this effect is such as to require for its producing cause all that which we include in the idea of Deity. For the working of this two-fold problem, we find an array of arguments drawn from these several sources, — *metaphysics*, *physics*, the department of *mind*, the department of *morals*. Of these, it is in the power of *physics* only, and not of *metaphysics*, if the preceding observations and reasonings are correct, to show clearly that the present things had a beginning ; in other words, that the world itself, the universe of which we form a part, is in truth an *effect*. Nor will physics even, as commonly employed, do this. The fitness of means to ends, the various instances which we find in the material universe of what we call design, and what seems to us like arrangement and contrivance, do not show this ; inasmuch as we must first know that these arrangements themselves have had a beginning, and are not uncaused and self-existent qualities of an uncaused and self-existent substance. What we see of this sort

in the universe may be sufficient to suggest the idea of a God, and render it altogether probable that such a being exists; may indeed convince most minds that such is the fact; may greatly strengthen and corroborate the evidence derived from other sources; but cannot clearly and certainly demonstrate that which we seek to know. In order to establish this point on a sure basis, we must call to our aid a class of sciences hitherto much neglected, and even regarded with distrust by theological writers, but which, we believe, will yet be found not harmless merely, not serviceable merely, but indispensable, it may be, to the exact and clear exhibition, and sure foundation, of the truths involved in natural theology.

This point established, that the present order of things is not without beginning, and the way is clear. Reason assures us that if there be a beginning, there must be also a beginner; if an effect, a cause; and that if we go back far enough, we must come at last to that which is the source of all other being, itself uncaused, self-existent, eternal. This is God; but yet not the whole of God; not the complete idea that we form of Deity. And here the argument from design falls into place, and enables us to infer that the builder of this goodly frame possesses intelligence, power, wisdom, skill, if not *absolutely unlimited* — and of that we cannot be sure as yet, inasmuch as from the *finite* we cannot strictly demonstrate the *infinite* — yet vast, and altogether beyond our power of comprehension. Lastly, the moral nature of man, the noblest department of those divine works which lie within the narrow circle of our vision, demonstrates to us the higher and nobler attributes of Deity, his righteousness, justice, and benevolence.

These things ascertained, and clearly established, natural theology has nothing further to do. Its work is accomplished. Whatever else we wish to know of God, we are to look for it not in his *works*, but in his *word*; not creation, but revelation, is from this point to be our guide.